



UNIT-9

Starting & Running A Life Coaching

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this unit the learner will be able to:

- ✓ Begin establishing their own life coaching business
- ✓ Generate leads and attract clients to their new business
- ✓ Understand the significance of the Charter of Life Coaching Practice

Unit 9

Starting and Running a Coaching Practice

Running a successful life coaching practice means finding ways to continuously convert enquiries into paying clients, in order to sustain your business. Irrespective of how qualified, competent and capable you are as a life coach, it counts for nothing if you don't attract and engage clients in the first place. Unfortunately, a strong desire to help people and the skills required to do so aren't enough to guarantee your success.

In order to build and run a successful coaching practice, you need to focus on two important things. The first of which being to build an attractive and respectable practice; the second being to generate enough interest among clients to actually *pay* for the services you provide. Despite the fact that your primary motivation may be helping others achieve bigger and better things, you still need to get paid.

This presents something of a dilemma for the professional life coach, as it often feels somewhat uncomfortable to charge for the services you offer. The reason being that from a purely objective perspective, you could argue that the client does the majority of the hard work. Which is true - the life coach simply exists to *facilitate* success, whereas the client actually makes it happen. Nevertheless, you need to remember that you've invested heavily in your training, education, professional development and the establishment of your business.

Without which, the clients you deal with would not be able to discover or realise their inner potential.

The good news being that actually setting up a life coaching business from scratch can be extremely inexpensive and surprisingly easy. In fact, there are only five things you need to get your business off the ground - at least in the early stages:

- A telephone
- A notepad or printed forms that you design
- A pen or pencil
- A diary
- An Internet connected computer

When you think about it, all you really need is a means by which to communicate effectively and consistently with your clients. Not to mention, an effective way of reaching out to them in the first place. Marketing a new life coaching practice can be tricky, for the simple reason that you may not know where to get started.

Historically, one of the most effective ways of promoting a life coaching business has been to deliver speeches in front of large groups of people. For example, you could get in touch with your local Chamber of Commerce, a regional management institute or any other society that regularly chairs meetings and hires external speakers.

The key proviso being that not only do you offer to provide a motivational speech backed by genuine

experience and expertise, but you also offer to do so for *free*. In return, the organizers allow you to take part in the event, during or after which you can hand out flyers, business cards and so on. Under no circumstances should it come across as a purely promotional venture, but rather a showcase of your talents and capabilities.

If you intend to make any public appearances to promote your business, you need to carefully plan every aspect of the talk ahead of time. For example, if you're planning to appear before a large audience of mid-level professionals, you'll probably want to focus on career development and workplace issues.

In addition, you should also have some kind of relevant offer prepared, which could include a free initial coaching session for anyone who takes a leaflet away with them. Again, you must never resort to the hard-sell - it's a case of letting your capabilities sell themselves

Nailing Public Appearances

When making a public appearance to promote your business, nothing matters more than a powerful and memorable first impression. Your objective is to communicate the various benefits of life coaching, though in a manner that doesn't come across as purely promotional. In addition, you need to familiarise your audience with what life coaching is, how it works and what they can expect to get out of it.

More often than not, it's the first and last sentences you say that will be remembered most prominently. This is why it's important to ensure your first and last sentences are both impactful closely connected - three possibilities being as follows:

- **Opening:** "Life coaching can seriously change your life."
- **Closing:** "Call me if you're serious about making the changes you've always wanted to make."
- **Opening:** "Think of me as a bottle opener - I release untapped potential."
- **Closing:** "Let me help you to pop your cork of potential."
- **Opening:** "I am a modern day magician. I reawaken dreams and make them come true."
- **Closing:** "Life coaching is the magic of the new millennium."

Of course, the appropriateness of the sentence you come up with will be determined by the nature of the event and the audience you speak to.

Given how coaching typically takes place one-to-one, you will need to invite at least one volunteer to participate to demonstrate how things work. As you cannot guarantee anyone in the audience will volunteer, you need to establish a commitment ahead of time from one of the organizers.

Encouraging audience members to participate means capturing their interests and engaging them. Rather than simply saying "Can I please have a volunteer for this next segment?", you could say something along the lines of "Is there anyone here who has an area in their life they've tried to change in the past but were not successful, and still wants to change that area?"

If several people raise their hands, ask each of them what it is they would like to change. Along with giving the rest of the audience something to think about, this will allow you to choose a volunteer with an issue you are familiar with to demonstrate how coaching works. Or else, the topic you believe

is of greatest value and relevance to the rest of the audience.

Introducing Yourself

There's a good chance that when attending events in general, you will be asked what you do for a living. You can tell those quizzing your profession that you're a life coach, but this might not tell them a great deal. It can therefore be beneficial to provide a brief explanation of what you do, which given the complexity of your profession can be tricky.

It's important to avoid anything overly corny or complex, instead focusing on what it is you set out to achieve when working with clients. Simple ways of explaining what you do could include the following conversation starters:

- "I open the door to clients' untapped potential"
- "I help clients achieve the lives they want to live"
- "I help people see what they're really capable of"
- "I'm a specialist in gap analysis - I close the gap between goals and achievement"

Again, it's important to avoid anything too over-rehearsed or corny. Rather than quoting one-liners, it's better to provide a franker and more honest overview of what you do. In the event that the individual you're conversing with struggles to understand what you do, this can actually be beneficial. Rather than attempting to explain your profession, try asking them a simple question: "May I ask you something? Is there any area of your life you wish you could change?"

When they provide their response, you will be in a perfect position to explain what it is you do. You can tell them that you work with clients with exactly these kinds of desires, objectives and issues, empowering them to overcome obstacles and tap into their hidden potential. At which point, you can ask them if they're interested in organizing a meeting, which will (of course) be 100% free of charge, with no obligation to go ahead if they aren't completely satisfied.

If nothing else, don't let anyone walk away without at least handing them a business card.

Referrals and Recommendations

There is no better way of getting new clients for your business than by way of referrals and recommendations. This happens in two ways - the first of which being when one or more existing clients are so happy with the services you provide that they instinctively recommend you to others. This is the kind of word of mouth that can be worth its weight in gold and tends to be one of the most effective drivers of business for life coaching agencies.

The second occurs when the life coach directly *asks* the client whether there may be anyone they know who may benefit from their services. It could be a colleague at work, a friend, a family member or anyone else at all - somebody they think would appreciate and benefit from coaching. In this instance, there are two important things to remember.

First of all, you'll only succeed with this approach if the client is absolutely delighted with your services and has achieved their goals. Secondly, it isn't usually appropriate to reach out to a prospective candidate directly and suggest they could benefit from life coaching. There's every chance they'll take offence at the suggestion and be very displeased their contact information was shared with you. Cold-calling for sales purposes should therefore be avoided at all costs. Instead, ask the client to pass your details on to the prospective client and have *them* call you.

No specific model or formula can guarantee the acquisition of new business for your life coaching practice. Every client you deal with will be 100% unique, as will every prospective client you approach through them. Once again, the most important thing to remember at all times is to avoid coming across as too pushy or promotional. You need to make it clear that your priority lies in helping your clients achieve bigger and better things - not simply generating more business and earning more money.

Web Marketing and Promotion

These days, the overwhelming majority of clients who are considering life coaching services research their options online. Along with studying the life coaching process and determining whether or not it's for them, they'll also look for life coaches using the web. Traditional telephone directories and the like having become more or less outdated.

As a result, one of the most important assets for any life coaching business is a high-quality website. This is the all-encompassing resource that will introduce your business to the world, communicate your unique selling points (USP) and engage your target audience. This means you need to provide enough information to sell yourself and your services, though again without reverting to the hard-sell.

What often makes the difference from one website to the next is the extent to which the life coach provides relevant information that goes beyond the basics. While one life coaching website simply showcases the education and qualifications of the life coach, another provides everything from helpful FAQs to case studies to the latest new stories and so on. The latter always painting or more appealing picture for prospective candidates.

In any case, it's important to remember that owning and operating a quality website alone isn't enough. Due to the sheer competition among life coaches online, you'll need to focus heavily on marketing and advertising. Always remember that the vast majority of prospective clients locate their life coaches using search engines like Google. This means paying close attention to search engine optimisation (SEO), in order to ensure your business ranks prominently in the search engine results page (SERP) rankings.

There are also endless options for paid advertising online, which include paid search ads, paid social media marketing and so on. Email campaigns should also be considered and the importance of a creating an engaging LinkedIn profile cannot be overstated. If you lack the knowledge and expertise necessary to build and develop a strong, prominent and high-performance online presence, you may need to outsource some or all of your website development and digital marketing requirements to a third-party service provider.

Charter of Life Coaching Practice

The vast majority of professional life coaches agree to uphold and abide by the semi-official “Charter of Life Coaching”, which governs the standards that should be upheld by all coaches:

Aim

I aim to provide a high-quality professional coaching service, which serves the needs and interests of my clients. I aim to build long-term relationships with you. These, in turn, will enable us to work together to enhance your working and business skills and competencies. I aim to support you in achieving your goals, career, health, wealth, contribution, relationships and mission.

My Values

Respect, Integrity, Honesty, Quality, Professionalism, Partnerships and Value.

Guarantees

I will make every effort to supply the coaching hours contracted to high standards. Should I make a mistake I will seek to remedy it to your satisfaction.

Courtesy

In all dealings I will maintain a high level of courtesy to clients, their employees and their customers. I will reply promptly to all and any enquiries.

Information and Assistance

Within the limits of maintaining the confidentiality of other clients, I will provide all the information and assistance that I can, to fulfil any contracts to the highest standards.

Fairness

I will seek to be fair in all aspects of my business relationship with clients.

Confidentiality

I will at all times respect the confidentiality of clients and will not divulge any information unless required to by the law.

Time Allocation

At all times, I will allocate and be available for the session times agreed in the contract and remuneration will be apportioned in all circumstances for this allocation.

Life Coaching for Quality Results

Every life coaching session and collective programme thereof is 100% unique. The key to successful

life coaching lies in tailoring the services you provide to the individual requirements of each and every client, no two of which are ever the same.

That said, there are several foundational 'frameworks' that can be used as the framework for a successful life coaching programme. One example of which being the I CAN DO model, which rather than dictating the details of the programme simply outlines its basic structure and objectives.

The formula is fully described by John Whitmore in his book Coaching for Performance:

- Investigate
- Current
- Aims
- Number
- Date
- Outcome

The I-CAN-DO life coaching model is flexible and easily adapted for applications focused on overall life aims or for setting and evaluating the outcomes of a session.

Life Coaching Chart

Topic	Current Situation	Hours per 98 hour week	Future aims
Health What is important to you when you consider your health?			
Wealth What constitutes a wealthy life for you?			
Family What and who are important to you regarding your family?			

Topic	Current Situation	Hours per 98 hour week	Future aims
Relationships Who is important to you?			
Spiritual What is important to you as far as spiritual growth is concerned?			
Career/job What is important to you in your work?			
Playtime What do you do just for fun?			
Lack What other areas in your life require attention?			

Using the life coaching charts above can be useful for gaining insights into clients' priorities. By ensuring each category is completed, you will be able to determine what aspects of the client's life they focus the most attention on, along with any potential deficits in other areas. Upon completing the charts above, you will have also tackled the first three stages of the I CAN DO life coaching model -investigate, define current situation and identify aims.

Completing the I-CAN-DO Mnemonic:

- I:** Investigate what is so important to the client that they decided to hire you.
- C:** What is their current life situation (use the Life Coaching Chart opposite)?
- A:** What are their aims in life?
- N:** How many different ways could they achieve the aims?
- D:** By what date do they want to achieve their aims?
- O:** What are the outcome achievement indicators?

Completing this life coaching chart will provide you with important insights that can then be used to create a programme of life coaching accordingly. It is therefore a good idea to provide new clients with a copy of the life coaching chart ahead of the first formal session - typically during the first free introductory consultation, if they decide to go ahead.

As a life coach, your job is to read, interpret and work with the information you are provided with for the benefit of the client. In some instances, it may be possible to pinpoint the crux of their issues using this coaching chart alone. In others, clarification through careful subsequent questioning and conversations will be necessary.

Renewals

Under no circumstances should you ever attempt to persuade a client to 'renew' their agreement/committal to your services, until the final session of the programme. Make it clear to them along the way that they can work with you for as long as they like, but never put them in a position where they feel pressured to sign up for anything more than they already have.

Even during the final session, you need to be extremely careful with the way you approach renewals. Ideally, it should be down to the client to state that they would like to continue working with you and request a continuation of your services. Assuming you've done your job properly and delighted the client with your work, this shouldn't be too much of a problem.

Take a look at things from the client's viewpoint and think about whether you would request a continuation in their position.

Questions to consider:

- What needs to be improved for this client to want to renew with me?
- Was I in a peak state throughout the entire life coaching session?
- How did I listen?
- Did I allow myself to become distracted at any time while I was engaged during the session?
- Did I miss any nonverbal clues?
- Did I assume, delete or distort information from this client?
- How judgmental was I?
- What needs to be improved for the next session?
- Are there any actions I can take between now and the next coaching session to improve my service to this client?

Rather than saying to your client "I can offer you X and Y if you keep coming back", it's more effective to ask them if there's anything else they would like you to do for them. Let them know your door is always open, that it's been a pleasure working with them and you'd be delighted to continue working with them in the future.

If they aren't willing to renew at the time, don't persuade them to do so. Instead, simply contact them by email or telephone at a later date, explaining that you're interested in how they're doing. You're assessing the outcome of the arrangement and collecting feedback, as opposed to persuading them to come back for more.

Demonstrate this kind of commitment and all the renewals you'll need will come your way naturally.

Further Reading: